

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7223

INFO USCINCSO QUARRY HTS

USCOMSOLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 6731

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PEPR, AR, US

SUBJECT: CONTINUING REACTION TO US HUMAN RIGHTS

SANCTIONS POLICY

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 6383 (B) BUENOS AIRES 6395

(C) BUENOS AIRES 6396

SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH THE QUANTITY OF ANTI-US PRESS
PLAY IS PETERING OUT, THE EMOTIONAL CONTENT LINGERS
ON. MUCH OF THE COMMENTARY IS PARANOIAC, FOLLOWING
SET PATTERNS OF NATIONAL ANGUISH WHEN ARGENTINE
OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN "MISUNDERSTOOD" ABROAD. THERE
IS LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT THE ANTI-US CAMPAIGN WAS EXPLICITLY
INSPIRED BY THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT SOURCES AND INDEED
IT WAS SOMEWHAT LESS INTENSE THAN WE ANTICIPATED.
OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO THE DERIAN STATEMENT HAS BEEN LIMITED TO
DATE TO A FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE AND CANCELATION OF
ARGENTINE PARTICIPATION IN UNITAS. WE HAVE
BEEN FOREWARNED TO EXPECT A RESURGENCE OF ILL
FEELING WHEN THE HUMPHREY-KENNEDY BILL BECOMES
EFFECTIVE, HOWEVER. SOME PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY VOLUNTARY
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ORGANIZATIONS ATTACKING THE ANTI-ARGENTINE DEFAMATION
CAMPAIGN FROM ABROAD HAVE CONTAINED AN UNDERLYING PLEA
TO THE GOA, HAVING WON THE WAR, TO BEGIN WAGING THE PEACE --
BUT SUCH CALLS ARE STILL SPARSE AND, WE THINK, PREMATURE
IN TERMS OF HAVING AN EFFECT ON HARD-CORE VIEWS IN THE
ARMED FORCES. END SUMMARY.

1. WEEKS AFTER THE EXIM BANK DECISION AND PATT DERIAN'S BOMBSHELL CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY ON ARGENTINA, EMOTIONAL VESTIGES OF THE REACTION ARE STILL QUITE EVIDENT IN THE ARGENTINE MEDIA AND IN CONVERSATIONAL COMMENTARY, ALTHOUGH THE VOLUME IS DIMINISHING. HOURLY SPOT ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT-OWNED RADIO STATION SUM UP THE MOOD: "MR. CARTER: KEEP YOUR MONEY OR USE IT FOR NEGROES IN YOUR COUNTRY WHO ARE DYING OF HUNGER. WE DO NOT NEED YOUR MONEY TO BUILD YACYRETA ANYHOW." FEATURE WRITERS TAKE PSYCHIC COMFORT FROM PRESIDENT CARTER'S DEPRESSED POPULARITY RATINGS AND FROM STORIES THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS IN POLITICAL TROUBLE BACK HOME. GENERAL GORDON SUMNER'S CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY, SENATOR HOLLINGS' STATEMENT AND HENRY KISSINGER'S RECENT SPEECH ON HUMAN RIGHTS ARE HAILED AS HOPEFUL SIGNS THAT A COUNTER-REFORMATIONAL STRUGGLE IS GOING ON IN WASHINGTON, BUT FRUSTRATION SETS IN AGAIN AS A RESULT OF GENERAL MCAULIFFE'S REPORTED DECLARATION THAT THERE IS NO DIVISION BETWEEN STATE DEPARTMENT AND PENTAGON HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES.

2. THE DIVERSIONARY PRESS EMPHASIS ON US RACIAL PROBLEMS IN THE FORM OF CRUDE PHOTO MONTAGES SEEMS TO HAVE RUN ITS COURSE. ON JOURNALIST SOURCE ALLEGES THAT LA RAZON'S TREATMENT OF THE DOMESTIC US RACIAL SCENE WAS THE RESULT OF GOA PRESSURES. WHILE MILITARY INTERVENTORS OF SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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RADIO STATIONS REPORTEDLY WERE ACTIVE IN INCITING ANTI-US COMMENTARY, WE DO NOT HAVE CONCLUSIVE CONFIRMATION OF A COORDINATED GOA EFFORT. EVEN IF TRUE, IT REALLY WAS NOT NECESSARY. IT DOES NOT TAKE MUCH AROUSE THE NATIONALIST BEAST THAT LURKS BEHIND ALMOST EVERY ARGENTINE BREAST AND ARGENTINE NEWSMEN, CONDITIONED TO THE ART OF SURVIVAL IN A COUNTRY WHICH HAS EXPERIENCED SHARP SWINGS OF THE POLITICAL PENDULUM FOR DECADES, HAVE JUST BEEN DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY. AT ANY RATE, OVER THE PAST WEEK CARTOONISTS AND WRITERS APPEAR TO HAVE SEIZED ON A NEW TARGET IN THE WAKE OF THE ABRUPT SUSPENSION OF ARGENTINE-CHILEAN TALKS OVER THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE. IT MAY BE THAT THE ARGENTINES' ATTENTION SPAN IS QUITE LIMITED, BUT, WHATEVER THE EXPLANATION, PINOCHET SEEMS TO BE REPLACING PATT DERIAN AS PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1 OF THE MOMENT.

3. OFFICIAL ATTENTION IS ALSO TURNED TO MAKING A SUCCESS OUT OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND MAKING THE MOST OUT OF THE VISITS OF UN GENERAL SECRETARY KURT WALDHEIM AND ILO DIRECTOR GENERAL FRANCIS BLANCHARD.

4. THE AMBASSADOR, JUST RETURNED FROM HIS FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE PROVINCE OF CORRIENTES, WAS IMPRESSED BY THE WARM WELCOME HE RECEIVED FROM HIS GRACIOUS HOSTS. NO SIGN OF A GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE US THERE. FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD MEMBER PHILIP CALDWELL AND THE US PETROLEUM TRADE MISSION HAVE ALSO BEEN POLITELY RECEIVED IN GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC CIRCLES.

5. NOW THAT THE MEDIA'S ANTI-US CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO BE SUBSIDING, IT STRIKES US THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE RESPONDING TO DERIAN'S BLUNT PUBLIC ASSESSMENT AND THE ACCOMPANYING EMOTIONAL DISPLAY WERE LESS INTENSE THAN THE ARGENTINES ARE CAPABLE OF ORCHESTRATING. HOWEVER, SOME LOCAL SOURCES DISPUTE THIS CONTINITION--ARUGING CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT THE OFFICIAL REACTION AGAINST THE US WAS UNDULY HARD, GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARGENTINA ORIGINATES PRIMARILY NOT FROM THE US BUT FROM WESTERN EUROPE WHERE THE MONTONEROS MAINTAIN THE PRINCIPLA BASES AND ENJOY THE COMPLACENT TOLERANCE OF EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC POLITICIANS. THESE SOURCES EMPHASIZE THAT ARGENTINE WRATH HAS NOT CONCENTRATED ON THE EUROPEANS. TO THE CONTRARY, AN IMPORTANT EFFORT CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IS THE VISIT OF A GROUP OF FRENCH LEGISLATORS AND MAYORS AS A FIRST STEP TOWARD IMPROVING FRANCO-ARGENTINE RELATIONS AND INCREASING TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. EXPLANATION OF THIS PHENOMENON, WE

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ARE TOLD, IS FOUND IN THE ARGENTINE BELIEF THAT EUROPE IS A FADING POWER ENTITY IN THE WORLD POLITICAL SCENE, WHEREAS THE ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II HAVE PERCEIVED THE US AS A NATURAL ALLY WITHIN THE RIO TREATY FRAMEWORK THROUGH WHICH A PERMANENT MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN CREATED. THESE HAOPEES HAVE NOW BEEN DASHED, ACCORDING TO THIS VIEW, AND RESULTANT FRUSTRATION REPORTEDLY HAS PRODUCED THE MORE VITRIOLIC REACTION AGAINST THE US.

6. IN ADDITION TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE, THE ONLY FORMAL ACTION TAKEN TO DATE BY THE GOA IN PROTEST AGAINST RECENT US HUMAN RIGHTS MOVES HAS BEEN THE CANCELLATION OF ARGENTINE NAVY PARTICIPATION IN THE ANNUAL UNITAS EXERCISE. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE ARGENTINE NAVY HAS SIGNED TO US THAT PORT CALLS BY US SHIPS WILL BE WELCOME AND THAT THE USUAL PROVISIONING REQUIREMENTS WILL BE FULFILLED. A NAVY SOURCE HAS SUMMARIZED ITS POSTURE BY PHILOSOPHIZING "WHEN YOU SHUT THE DOOR, YOU MUST KEEP THE WINDOW OPEN." WE ARE AWARE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DIVIDED AS TO WHETHER --AN, IF SO, HOW -- TO RESPOND TO PERCEIVED US "INSULTS". WE ARE ALREADY
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RECEIVING HINTS THAT THERE WILL BE A RESURGENCE OF ANTI-US CAMPAIGNING--THIS TIME MORE CLEARLY UNDER GOVERNMENT SPONSORSHIP--WHEN THE HUMPHREY-KENNEDY AMENDMENT COMES INTO EFFECT AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

7. AN UNDERLYING THEME COMMONLY HEARD IS THAT STATE DEPARTMENT PRESSURES ARE INSATIABLE AND FORM PART OF A WELL-PLANNED, MULTI-STAGE US OFFENSIVE AGAINST ARGENTINA. FIRST, THE ARGENTINES COMPLAIN, US EMPHASIS WAS ON ALLEVIATING THE SITUATION OF A HANDFUL OF INDIVIDUAL HIGH-INTEREST CASES. WHEN THE GOA MOVED TO ACCOMMODATE THESE REQUESTS, THE US ALLEGEDLY TIGHTENED THE SCREWS A NOTCH BY DEMANDING DIFFICULT POLICY MEASURES SUCH AS RELEASING TERRORIST SUSPECTS HELD UNDER THE PEN, ETC. THE LATEST US DEMANDS ARE SEEN AS COVER FOR WHAT IS BELIEVED TO BE THE TRUE US OBJECTIVE, NAMELY, INSISTENCE ON A TIMETABLE FOR A RETURN TO DEMOCRACY IN ARGENTINA. ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS READ THE LETELIER CASE AS A US EFFORT BALDLY TO OVERTHROW THE PINOCHET REGIME--I.E., A RESURGENCE OF TRADITIONAL YANKEE IMPERIALISM IN THE HEMISPHERE UNDER THE BENIGN GUISE OF PROMOTING UNIVERSAL

HUMAN RIGHTS. FROM THERE IT IS A SHORT STEP TO PARANOICALLY IMAGING ALL KINDS OF EVIDENCE OF A US DESTABILIZATION EFFORT AGAINST THEM AS WELL. PARADOXICALLY, ARGENTINES, SPURRED ON BY CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE HOSTILITIES WITH CHILE, ALREADY FEAR THERE IS A US PLAN TO FLOOD CHILE WITH ARMS SUPPLIES ONCE THE PINOCHET REGIME IS OVERTHROWN IN A MOVE BELIEVED DESIGNED TO APPLY ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON ARGENTINA.

8. THE FLAREUP FOLLOWING THE EXIM BANK DECISION AND MS. DERIAN'S TESTIMONY PRODUCED A SPLURGE OF PATRIOTIC PUBLIC AVOWALS FROM PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CITIZENRY AT LARGE. ONE LADIES' MAGAZINE, PARA TI, FOR EXAMPLE (PART OF THE EDITORIAL ATLANTIDA GROUP WHICH PUBLISHED THE MULTI-PAGE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE NEW YORK TIMES A FEW WEEKS AGO), CONVENIENTLY PROVIDES POSTCARD CUTOUTS TO BE SENT TO YOUR FAVORITE INTERNATIONAL OGRE. WE HAVE ALSO SEEN A RASH OF LETTER-WRITING FROM ORDINARY CITIZENS EXPRESSING NATIONALIST INDIGNATION OVER THE CAMPAIGN TO DEFAME ARGENTINA FROM ABROAD. SOME OF THESE ARE PERSONALLY ADDRESSED TO PATT DERIAN. YET, THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL THEME RUNNING THROUGH SOME OF THESE PRONOUNCEMENTS, WHICH CALLS FOR AN END TO THE EMERGENCY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME REPUDIATING ALLEGED US INTROMISSION IN ARGENTINA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE MESSAGE CONTAINED IN THE CLARIN EDITORIAL OF AUGUST 18 (REFTELS B AND C) THAT IF THE TERRORISTS HAVE BEEN ROUNDLY DEFEATED AS THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS, THERE IS NO FURTHER NEED OF CLANDESTINE ARRESTS AND OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF "THE DIRTY WAR"--HAS SHOWN UP AGAIN IN ONE OR TWO STATEMENTS FROM PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO PERCEIVE EVIDENCE OF A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US PRESSURES AND THESE AS YET SPARSE, ALMOST GINGERLY PRONOUNCEMENTS OF CONCERN ABOUT DISAPPEARANCES AND OTHER CONTINUING SIGNS OF INDIVIDUAL INSECURITY. THIRTY MONTHS AFTER THE COUP AND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND STAGE OF THE NATIONAL REORGANIZATION PROCESS WITH ITS RENEWED CALL FOR "A DIALOGUE," IT MAY BE THAT THIS IS A LOGICAL IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

9. HOWEVER, WE SEE THESE TIMID FIRST SIGNS OF PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT AS PREMATURE IN TERMS OF HAVING AN INFLUENCE ON HARD-CORE ARMY VIEWS. WHILE THE NUMBER OF ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATIONS HAS BEEN REDUCED, THE OPERATING METHODS HAVE NOT CHANGED. WE CONTINUE TO HEAR THAT THE NEW ARMY CHIEF, GENERAL VIOLA, WISHES TO TIGHTEN CONTROL OVER THE SECURITY APPARATUS AND CONTINUE THE LONG TREK TOWARDS SOME DEGREE OF NORMALIZATION.

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HOWEVER, THIS OBJECTIVE IS DEPENDENT UPON THE REMOVAL OF
KEY HARDLINERS POLITICALLY OPPOSED TO THE VIDELA-VIOLA POWER
CENTER, E.G., ARMY FIRST CORPS COMMANDER SUAREZ MASON.
UNTIL THIS PROBLEM IS RESOLVED, WE DO NOT FORESEE ANY FURTHER
SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS EVEN WITH RESPECT TO OUR
OUTSTANDING HIGH-INTEREST CASES SUCH AS TIMERMAN.
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